



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **ICE AGENTS ARREST ETHIOPIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATOR USING NEW AUTHORITY UNDER INTELLIGENCE REFORM ACT**

*-- ICE's "No Safe Haven" Commitment Continues Under New Law --*

ATLANTA, GA – Michael J. Garcia, Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Kenneth A. Smith, Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE Atlanta, today announced the first arrest of a human rights violator under the new authorities of the recently-enacted Intelligence Reform Act of 2004.

This morning, ICE Special Agents in Atlanta arrested Kelbessa Negewo, a 54-year-old Ethiopian national suspected of committing numerous acts of torture and extrajudicial killings in his native Ethiopia. As part of the investigation, Negewo's U.S. citizenship has been revoked. Negewo's arrest is the latest example of ICE's continuing commitment to apprehend, prosecute, and remove human rights violators from the United States.

Negewo was arrested as an alien subject to removal proceedings for violating Section 237 (a)(4)(D) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by Section 5501 of the Intelligence Reform Act. The Intelligence Reform Act amendment adds the commission of acts of torture and/or extrajudicial killings as grounds for inadmissibility and deportability. Under this amendment, ICE has expanded authorities to pursue investigations and removals against human rights violators in the United States.

"Today's arrest marks a new chapter in ICE's longstanding efforts to arrest, prosecute, and remove human rights violators from the United States. With the expanded authorities under the Intelligence Reform Act, ICE has a powerful new tool to deny these egregious criminals a safe haven in this country. Human rights violators are not welcome here," said Assistant Secretary Garcia.

During the 1970s, a military dictatorship led by Mengistu Haile Mariam and known as the "Dergue" ruled Ethiopia. In the mid-1970s, Negewo served as the chairman of Higher Zone 9, one of several specialized government units in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa that employed a campaign of torture, arbitrary imprisonment, and summary executions against perceived internal enemies of the Ethiopian government. This campaign was known as "Red Terror."

Negewo was responsible for having numerous innocent civilians, mostly students, incarcerated, tortured, and subsequently executed by firing squad. In some instances, Negewo and his guards forced women to undress,

then bound their arms and legs together before hanging them from poles for severe beatings, according to U.S. court records. Negewo's actions were so severe that the Ethiopian dictatorship eventually jailed him.

Upon his release from Ethiopian prison, Negewo fled to the United States. In 1988, Negewo applied for and ultimately obtained immigration benefits in this country. He later adjusted to a permanent resident. Ultimately, he became a U.S. citizen.

ICE agents subsequently initiated an investigation into Negewo, who was residing and working in the Atlanta area. Several of Negewo's torture victims who had relocated from Ethiopia to Atlanta had encountered Negewo in the city by chance.

In April 2002, the Ethiopian government convicted Negewo in absentia for numerous human rights violations, including 13 counts of killing, three counts of disappearance of people, one count of torture, and one count of unlawful of property. In May 2002, the Ethiopian Supreme Court sentenced Negewo in absentia to life imprisonment.

The ICE investigation ultimately revealed that Negewo had made false statements about his past human rights violations to obtain U.S. citizenship. As a result of the investigation, Negewo's U.S. citizenship was revoked in U.S. District Court in the Northern District of Georgia in October 2004. Today, Negewo has been placed into removal proceedings and remains in ICE custody.

The Negewo case is just one of more than 200 pending investigations of human rights violators in the United States by ICE agents. At the same time, ICE attorneys are currently tracking and litigating more than 500 cases involving human rights violators from more than 60 countries nationwide.

Negewo's arrest is the latest under ICE's ongoing initiative to identify, apprehend, prosecute, and remove human rights violators. To enhance these efforts, ICE created the Human Rights Violators & Public Safety Unit and its legal counterpart, the Human Rights Law Division, in the summer of 2003. ICE has identified, arrested and prosecuted human rights violators from around the world.

The Human Rights Violators & Public Safety Unit investigates individuals alleged to have committed crimes such as: torture, suppression of religious freedoms, persecution, and genocide. The Human Rights Law Division is responsible for providing legal advice to agents and litigation assistance to ICE field attorneys in potential persecutor and human rights abuser cases.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.*